

17 March 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Building a New Image

STATINTL Too much, our image--awful word--is that of the dirty tricks department. We should try to evoke other responses from the public. I therefore recommend:

That the Chairman of our Fine Arts Commission, [redacted] and I be authorized to

(1) Get in touch with Nancy Hanks, of the National Endowment of the Arts, in connection with the forthcoming First Federal Design Assembly. We should ask if we can make any useful contribution to the Assembly. Miss Hanks is an Agency admirer.

(2) Invite Washington area art critics out for a private viewing of the Escher prints in our exhibition hall. (You should see it).

(3) Make arrangements so employees' families can see the Escher prints.

The whole point of this is to attack the public conscienceness of the Agency from an entirely new angle: Whereas they expect the cloak and the dagger, presto! We produce the palate and the brush.

[redacted]
J. Edgar Hoover
Assistant to the Director

STATINTL

STATINTL Attach: Washington Post editorial of 13 Mar 73
cc: [redacted]

STATINTL [redacted] Consultant

JDS
Director of Security

WASHINGTON POST
13 MAR 1973

Around Town

Good Talk About Good Design

"There will be good talk in Washington," the architecture critic of an out-of-town newspaper told her readers a few days ago. "And bad design forever."

The "good talk" the critic had in mind, is the First Federal Design Assembly which will convene here on April 2 and will include administrators from all federal agencies, state governors and a small group of leading designers of everything from postage stamps to freeways. The theme of the meeting is "The Design Necessity," which the sponsors of the assembly consider to be great. The chief sponsor, in a sense, is President Nixon, who has been invited to address the session and who last May, in a message to the Associated Councils of the Arts, launched the program to improve government design.

The immediate sponsor is the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, headed by S. Dillon Ripley, and the National Endowment of the Arts, directed by Nancy Hanks. They are not inclined to be satisfied with good talk alone.

The assembly, in fact, is only a prelude to some fairly solid and well-funded staff work that is already under way. The April meeting is to sanction that work, as it were. Its purpose is to start convincing the bureaucrats that "design is necessary because it serves human needs."

That, says the invitation to the meeting, "is its only excuse for being. As human needs have become more complicated, and human beings more numerous, the design necessity has become more intense. Nowhere is design more necessary than in the federal government,

the nation's largest client for design in visual communications, interiors, architecture and the landscaped environment. Yet federal design, like corporate design of 20 years ago, is often mistaken as a luxury. There are easily understood reasons for this. A responsible government has to defend whatever it does on all fronts, and the handiest defense is quantification. It is easy to suppose that we cannot afford what we cannot measure.

"Easy but invalid," the statement continues. "Some design achievement—more than one might think—can be measured; but even where it cannot be, the results of design are measurable. And so are the results of non-design, which are indefensible. Non-design is truly what we cannot afford."

We think this is pretty good talk, indeed. But we, too, would be skeptical about bureaucratic indifference if it were not for that follow-up work the President has ordered. It includes the preparation of realistic guidelines for federal architecture, a federal graphics improvement program and a Civil Service Commission review of the way federal designers are hired and commissioned.

So on our part we are inclined to keep an open mind. It is true, as the out-of-town critic pointed out, that previous efforts to improve the looks and function of government buildings have bogged down. But this time, we think the "good talk" will meet with a good response. Dillon Ripley, Nancy Hanks and all the others, who have been working on this program for almost a year now, strike us as pretty responsible people.